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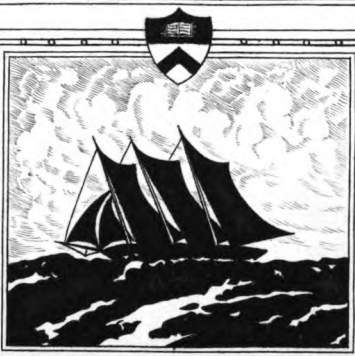

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CEYLON MARINE AND ESTUARY FISHING.

NOTES ON A NEGLECTED PASTIME

BY

A. H. PERTWEE.

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ANGLING NOTES.

[BY "PISCES."]

[*Reprinted from the "Times of Ceylon," July to September, 1907.*]

ARTICLE No. 1.

So little has been written regarding the sport awaiting the deep sea, estuary, and tank angler in Ceylon, that I have been asked to contribute to the *Times* my experiences in that direction.

In a letter written to the *Fishing Gazette* some time ago, Mr. R. A. Festing, of the Ceylon Civil Service, says "Very little is known, from an angler's point of view, about lagoon and tank fishing in Ceylon. There are a few enthusiasts to be met occasionally who will speak of great captures; but we badly want a second Thomas, not only to show us how to catch the fish, but to tell us what fish there are worth catching."

I hope no one will suppose that I aspire to fill the above-mentioned need. Sportsmen with the profound knowledge of Thomas, and the ability to impart it in such charming style, do not grow on every bush; and, although I have been a keen disciple of his for more years than I like to count, I still feel much like a whitebait trying to "blow" in imitation of the whale, whenever I sit down to write on matters piscatorial.

With which little introduction, we will now proceed.

The months of May, June, and July are, perhaps, the least likely of any period of the year to afford encouraging results to the novice, either in deep sea, harbour or

(RECAP)
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estuary waters; in fact they practically constitute the "off season" of the sea angler's year in the tropics. This being so, I propose dealing in this article with some of the varieties of fish to be found, and the tackle needed, to lure them from their native element, rather than to show how they may actually be caught.

And as I am writing primarily for the sportsman rather than the naturalist—though what angler is not something of a naturalist also?—I will, as far as possible, avoid the scientific cognomens of the various friends introduced, and give them, instead, their common or garden names—the names which your boatmen, your cook, and the bazaar men would use in referring to them.

THE SEER.

At the same time I warn the reader that it will be necessary now and again to resort to the Latin names, in order to avoid confusion, this being the case particularly with reference to the Seer, of which there are at least five varieties known and regularly caught on the coast of Ceylon, namely, *cybium guttatum*, *c. uhlii*, *c. interruptum*, *c. lineolatum*, and *c. commersoni*.

The varieties with which the reader will be most intimate (since they appear on the table of most houses at least once a day) are *c. guttatum* and *c. commersoni*, undoubtedly two of the finest fish known to deep-sea anglers.

Those of us who read Nature's signs in such matters, do not need to be told that the long lithe body, powerful tail, and big fins of the seer, all proclaim him to be a magnificent sporting fish; while his brilliant eye, and mouthful of wicked looking teeth, are sure signs of his readiness to take practically anything in the way of bait, natural or artificial.

Personally I have an aversion to fish without scales, as usually they are foul feeders, but the capture of

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the seer is far too good sport to neglect on that account, while he is unquestionably one of the best table fish we have. Consequently I advise you to both catch and eat him—if you can. Of course, the seer is not the much-lauded Tarpon, but he is at least related (I believe so, anyway), and in proportion to his weight is quite as plucky a fighter as his aristocratic relation.

The reader, if he be a novice, will perhaps take the words of the preceding paragraph, "if he can," to be a facetious leg-pulling term implying his want of skill, but he need not, for although I count myself a good all-round fisherman, I am open to admit that I have never yet hooked and landed a seer myself, though I have tried, ah, how I have tried! Altogether he is something of a mystery, is our friend *cybium* (by the way, his other name is Scomber, I find), inasmuch as he will often rush like a tiger at a crude strip of coconut bound to the shank of a prehistoric looking hook, mounted on a young cable, and trolled by a boatman, while he will "pass by on the other side" the most tempting looking Halcyon spinner, spoon, or minnow.

A friend of mine, the happy possessor of a small sailing boat (I always refer to it as his *yacht* when I want a blow) tells me he has tried every sort of artificial bait known either in England or America, and has never got so much as a rise. Hour after hour has been spent both in his own boat, and in one of the ordinary fishing out-riggers, and while the man with the cable was busy hauling in twenty and thirty pounders, never a glance was vouchsafed to the triumphs of Hardy and Allcock. On the other hand—alas, that I was without tackle that day—I have seen good big seer caught on a gut line, and a white feather-mounted hook, in Galle Harbour; and well-informed residents assure me that they are often

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caught up to ten or fifteen pounds that way. Of those I saw hooked, less than fifty per cent. were landed, for the simple reason that the men with the rods usually tried to stop the first mad rush made by the fish, and, as they almost invariably jumped out of the water and fell on a taut line, it was like trying to stop a locomotive engine with pack thread. Some of the larger fish made magnificent leaps, which I should say were as much as five or six feet high, and probably twice that distance long. Old anglers will understand what sort of chance a taut line has against proceedings of that nature.

The Sea Perch.

Another very plucky fighter, as also an excellent table fish, is the Sea Perch, of which there are numerous varities, though the red and grey are the two kinds generally caught. The latter run to a great size, probably over 100 lbs., and I have seen specimens brought in by the Mutwal fleet that must have weighed fifty or sixty pounds, though unfortunately I had no means of ascertaining their actual weight These are usually caught on lines, trolling with dead bait or a slice of skin from the tail end of a seer, much in the same way as mackerell are caught on the English coast.

The Moda.

Another well-known fish which the local angler will do well to look up, is the *moda*, a fish which seems to be fairly plentiful in most of the estuaries here about. I have seen numbers of them caught in the Kelani river near the Victoria Bridge, and, no doubt, they frequent the other rivers also; in fact, I have seen them at Kalutara and Bentota. This fish I have actually caught myself, and can give it a first-class character as a sporting fish. Moreover it is A1 on the table, a fact worth bearing in mind,

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though I trust the edible qualities of a fish will always remain a secondary consideration with my readers, as it is with all true disciples of the immortal Izaac.

A Choice Spot at Bentota.

The reference above to dead bait reminds me of an experience I recently had at Bentota, just under the second span of the railway bridge—a spot I would advise the unwary to make a mental note of, not because it is the best place I have found yet for mullet and nair, but, because the bottom of the river just about there seems to consist chiefly of old iron bolts and other engineering refuse, and is a champion spot to loose tackle in. Any way I was fishing there recently with a dead bait, *a la* Sinhalee that is, with only a single hook passed through the skin behind the dorsal fin of a small mullet, when without warning my rod was all but snatched out of my hands, the reel set up a delirious screech, and away went my line down towards the sea. My first thought was that I had hooked a deep sea shark at least, and so far as I know, it may have been one, for, alas, we never reached that state of intimate acquaintance that I was looking forward to . . . For about ten minutes, however, we had quite a lively time, at the end of which I found myself minus a lot of energy and some four or five feet of good gut, while my unseen opponent was plus a favourite hook and about three ounces of lead—not to mention the gut aforesaid. Now in this particular case I felt sure of my tackle, and was almost certain the fish had not broken me in fair fight. So I sent a man down to investigate the depths, and at the end of twenty minutes he reported he had found (1) part of an old iron girder, (2) several iron bars projecting from heavy blocks of stone. (3) a collection of large rocks with lots of space for fish to run under and out the other side, (4) several lengths

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of galvanised iron wire fencing, and (5) the remains of an iron ladder. As I said before, readers will do well to make a mental note of this spot in case they ever try their luck at Bentota.

The Name Difficulty.

On a subsequent occasion I was fishing a little below the bridge, using a live mullet for bait, and had another fairly good run (though not to be compared with the other) and succeeded in landing my fish, which turned out to be a speckled brown and white perch, of five lbs., an ugly brute, with a mouth like an earthquake for size, and full of tin-tack-like teeth. A native fishing near by referred to it as a *rock fish* and seemed to know no other name, but I have since identified it as *grammistes punctatus*, a fish much esteemed by the native. One of the greatest difficulties encountered by the angler out here is this very one of nomenclature. I know of fish which are called by at least three entirely different names in districts which are practically adjoining, consequently it does not in the least follow that, if you speak to your boatman of *moda* or *vettia*, he will understand what you mean. May be, he'll call those particular fish *kodavei* or *kalaj*, or both!

The Elops Saurus.

One fish in particular, a member of the Chela family, which has lately come under my notice, seems to have no end of different names, all of them quite unpronounceable in English, and yet he is such a dandy fighter that I must introduce him.

That well known sportsman, Col. Gordon Reeves, considers the fish in question to be *elops saurus*, the Tamil name for which is *ul'ahti*, and I propose to call him by that name for the present. Another reason for introducing this fish is that he will appeal to "the man with the fly," being a surface feeder and a free

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fly-taker. I have seen *ullahti* netted in the Kelani river near the entrance to the Negombo Canal, and they were rising in hundreds at the time (about 5 p.m.), and in many cases jumping clear out of the water, three or four feet high. Col. Reeves writes of this fish "he is a very game fellow, and can jump as big for his size as any fish I know." In weight the *ullahti* seems to run to only about three lbs., and perhaps 18 or 20 inches in length, being much like a herring in shape, thin and narrow; but he is very game and well worth the attention of fly fishers.

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ARTICLE No. 2.

There must be numbers of good fishermen in Ceylon who, at home, would never dream of letting such sport with rod and line go a-begging as they are doing here, and it is as much with the hope of arousing their dormant spirit, as a desire to teach the young idea how to fish, that I have strong together these stray notes.

Tackle for Estuary and Harbour Fishing.

One of the first problems that will present itself to the mind of the beginner, as indeed also to that of the old hand who has dropped out of the ranks of active anglers, is one connected with tackle, but if he will follow me carefully through this article, I can promise he will gather more knowledge of what is necessary, and what is not, than he would learn from actual experience in a year.

I am supposing that my reader is laying himself out for estuary and harbour fishing, and so will leave the consideration of deep sea tackle for separate treatment.

In buying rods, etc. (as in most other things in life), there is a "golden rule," laid down many years ago by a grand old Indian angler, and here it is: "Keep in mind your means and your strength, and buy your tackle accordingly."

When I first took seriously to fishing—which was many years ago, and in India—the fates directed my footsteps to a shop in Allahabad kept by a Mr. Luscombe who was, and for that matter still is, not only a true artist with rod and line, but a practical fishing tackle-manufacturer to boot.

A Wonderfully Cheap Indian Rod.

Here I was introduced to a new kind of rod which deserve to be much better known than they are, and which, in my opinion, are far superior for general all-

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round fishing to the most expensive weapons made at home. These rods are known in Northern India as Ringalls, and are, I believe, the same thing as Messrs. Oakes & Co. of Madras sell under the name of Labeo Rods. They are a sort of bamboo reed, hollow, and very light, but of most astonishing strength and flexibility. A rod of this kind, fully mounted with snake rings and brass reel fittings, and measuring, say, 12 to 15 feet (mine are 14 ft.), cost about R10 at Allahabad, or one-eighth of what you would have to pay for a new English salmon rod of the same size. I have found that for spinning purposes, they are not only lighter than English rods, but are much quicker in "recovering."

Writing of English rods reminds me of an incident that befell a party of two friends and self on a recent trip in North India for Mahseer. G was new to the country, and like the patriotic Englishman he is, insisted on taking along his 18-foot salmon rod, in fact he rather resented our persistency in making him add a Ringall, and probably agreed more for the sake of peace and quietness, than from any thought of ever using it. However, it went, and mighty glad he was subsequently that we *had* been persistent.

We arrived at our camping ground—I'm not going to give it away, suffice to say it was far up the Ganges—very early in the morning, before it was light, in fact, and as I had previously killed some very heavy fish there, we were all excitement to begin. P, the third in our company, was making Bovril, while I skirmished round looking for the boat we had sent ahead. Meanwhile G, the impatient contentious G, was busy fitting together his beloved greenheart, which he soon had in working order, with running line, trace, and a three-inch spoon. Immediately below our camping ground was a small

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waterfall and just above it a platform or pier running out from the bank to prevent the water cutting it away—in fact a small breakwater. It was just here that I had had such good sport the year before, and here G essayed his first spin.

Just what happened during the next thirty seconds would take as many minutes to chronicle, while the language G used, if faithfully recorded here would certainly scorch these virtuous sheets. Suffice it to say that he was into a monster the moment his spoon began to work, and his fish went down stream with a rush that not only tore the barrel clean out of his reel, but, as if to add insult to injury, carried away the two top joints of his precious greenheart into the bargain.

I like to add a nice curly moral to all my little anecdotes, and the moral to this is, "When you go fishing, take the advice of the man who has been there before, and knows."

But to return to the Ringall. Like most good things, it is not quite perfect; there is one disadvantage about it that has probably lost it more admirers than all its good features has attracted, and that is, you must take it all in one piece. It is no good at all if you cut it and make the ordinary ferule joints you've got to take it whole or not at all.

I hear the chorus of disapproval that will greet this fact, as also the enquiries as to *why* it cannot be cut, so I will tell you why it can't, and also why it needn't be. The Ringall being, as I have already mentioned, hollow, depends for its strength chiefly on the fact that at the moment of striking, and during all subsequent strains, *all* of the rod gives, and that from tip to reel it forms a perfect unbroken curve. Now no jointed rod does this, for the simple reason that the parts bound by the brass ferrules are kept perfectly rigid, and the under side of the curve

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at those points does not contract as it should do; in other words, the under half of the joints remain the same length as the upper half, consequently the under edge of the ferrule cuts through the very thin wall of the bamboo, and a bad smash-up follows. That is why you cannot successfully joint any hollow rod and retain its full strength.

A "CARRIER" FOR THE ROD.

The reason why you needn't is simpler. When not, in use, hang up your rods tip uppermost, from a loop, and not from the top ring. When transporting them from place to place, or from your house to river or sea, carry them (or rather get a cooly to do so) in an ordinary bamboo carrier. These cost about one rupee each, and with ordinary care will last a lifetime. This is how to make one. Take a female bamboo, the kind used for scaffolding will do, of about three inches diameter, and a few inches longer than your longest rod. Split it lengthwise and knock out all the joints except those at each end, and tack three or four short buckled straps round it so as to form hinges on one side and fastenings on the other. You now have a case very light, strong, and perfectly safe, it will go into the guard's van if you are travelling by rail, or the smallest podian can carry it. I have frequently carried mine in rickshaws, tikka gharies, bullock carts, and even on a bicycle, and hope to do so many a time again. If you are very particular you can have a teak case made, for out here, where none of us march for miles across country carrying our own rods as we might at home, a few pounds weight more or less is neither here nor there.

To give you an idea of what a Ringall is capable, here is a list of the fish we three caught on the occasion above referred to, every fish being brought into the bank before netting.

First day, 1 Masheer of 42 lbs., 1 of 50, 1 of 38, and 2 goonch both over 100 lbs. each.

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Second day, 2 Masheer of 40 lbs., 1 of 48, and one of 54 lbs., also 2 goonch, 1 of 80 and 1 of 66 lbs.

All these were caught on Ringalls, and we never had a breakage of any kind above the snood—tho' we had plenty below it! The spring balance we had weighed up to 100 lbs. only, so I cannot give the exact weight of the goonch caught on the first day. I believe, however, that 115 to 120 lbs. would be very near the mark, the boatmen reckoned them one-and-a-half maunds *i.e.*, 123 lbs., and they can generally make a fairly correct guess.

Some years ago, in 1895 I think, I gave a demonstration, at the Calcutta Swimming Baths, of the enormous strain a Ringall was capable of bearing. It was the occasion of the annual aquatic sports of the Calcutta Swimming Club, and, during the ten-minutes interval between the two halves of the programme, we had a

"MAN VERSUS FISH" COMPETITION.

The fish (a Mr. Mason if I remember rightly) was a powerful swimmer, and wore a web band round his chest, with a ring attached between the shoulder blades, to which my line, a specially twisted tussore of No. 9 thickness, was secured. The fish was allowed a slack line of thirty feet to dive on, and in order to score had to swim to the end of the bath, a distance of 100 feet, which he was much surprised to find an impossible task. Being over ten stone in weight he was of course an enormous strain on the rod, but 70 feet was as far as he could get, and at that distance he was swimming all he knew and not progressing an inch. Eventually, foot by foot I reeled him in, and though he made some nasty plunges, and twice somersaulted, he gained nothing beyond a cut toe, and was ignominiously gaffed (with a billiard cue) three feet from the spot he started from, and in less than eight minutes after his initial dive.

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If the above records are not sufficient to convert my readers to the use of Ringalls, I give them up as a bad job, and leave them to the fate that overtook friend G.

The Next Best—An English Rod.

In the unfortunate case of those who are wedded to English rods, and will not use anything else, I would suggest Enright's Castle Connel spliced rods as being the nearest approach I know of to Ringalls, and in every respect superior to ferruled ones, especially in a tropical climate, and although they are perhaps a little trouble to put together, the results are more than commensurate, for you have a rod which, like the Ringall, will *all* bend, every inch from tip to butt giving to the strain. On the other hand, however, they are expensive, a good Castle Connel costing from R40 to R80 landed here.

Before leaving this subject of rods, I must not omit to mention that a light trout rod is a very useful thing to have at hand, as there are a number of very game fly takers to be met with in our estuaries notably *Elops Saurus* and *Sardinella Neohowii*, the former of which I have already introduced to your notice, with a satisfactory character from one who knows them well.

Reels.

Now let us consider the question of reels, a matter which is almost, if not quite, as important as that of rods.

For ordinary river and estuary fishing, I carry three; one of 2¼ inches containing a tapered fly line, a larger one of 3½ inches on which I have 150 yards of No. 5 dressed salmon line, and a 6 inch Nottingham jumbo, carrying 200 yards of Warner's plaited flax waterproof line, the latter for use only where I expect extra heavy fish.

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In India, and especially in Bengal, it is the fashion to use ordinary twisted tussore lines, and for bottom fishing I have found them unequalled, being very light, strong, and, most important, very elastic. For spinning purposes, however, they are worse than useless, as they not only kink and kink till you have a mess compared with which the fabled knot of Gordius was a trifle, but they absorb such quantities of water that they cling to everything they touch and become a perfect nuisance.

My advice therefore lies in the direction of dressed lines for estuary fishing, and, provided they are fresh at the time of purchase, they will be found to last for years. Be very careful to see that they *are* fresh, however, for they deteriorate very rapidly if left in the shop unused. I generally send to England for these.

Having now provided ourselves with rod, reel, and line, there remain only

HOOKS, SPOONS AND OTHER SMALL DETAILS

to complete our outfit, and these I purpose dealing with in my next article.

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ARTICLE No. 3.

SPOONS, HOOKS, &c.

In concluding my last week's notes dealing with tackle, I mentioned that there now remained for consideration only such small matters as spoons, hooks, and such like details, but I did not intend to convey that these things were small in importance, because they are not—I referred only to their bulk, which in most instances is relatively small.

But before asking you to accompany me into the intricacies of gut and gimp, snood and trace, I wish to

HARK BACK FOR A MINUTE TO THE SUBJECT OF REELS.

In mentioning this item of an outfit, I omitted to say that in buying reels, particular care should be taken to avoid what are known as crank reels, which being about half the price of those with revolving plates, are often a temptation to the novice. A crank reel let me say for the benefit of the uninitiated, is one having a right angle handle on the *outside*, whereas it should have, and in the case of revolving plate reels has, simply an upright and tapered bone handle, which, when operated, turns the whole side of the reel. Apart from a neatness of appearance which characterises the revolving plate reel, it has another and far more important advantage in that it is much less likely to cause a smash up, particularly in casting. A loose loop of line getting over the tapered handle of a revolving plate reel, slips off at the slightest pull, but let a loop get over the handle of a crank reel, and see what follows! The smash-up that is absolutely certain to ensue in the event of a "run," not only

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spoils temper and tackle, but the fish so lost is invariably the largest of its kind ever seen in that particular water! It is *always* so, and I have seen dozens of cases; therefore take my advice and have nothing to do with crank handled reels. One more word, and I have finished with reels. See that your purchase has what is known as a *permanent* check, and not an *optional* one. Also avoid reels fitted with breaks; they are a delusion and a snare, as I know to my loss.

I am afraid the next few paragraphs will resemble a tackle dealer's price list rather than a page of angling notes, but what would you? I am trying to set forth just what you should possess if you aspire to become a successful river and estuary angler, and if you find the list growing monotonous, why the remedy is in your own hands, skip the list, and send your tackle dealer a carte-blanche order.

Prices of the "Details."

There are many articles beside the subjoined list which while perhaps not absolutely necessary, are still very useful to have at hand. I mean such things as repairing outfits, paints, varnish, etc., and these I may enumerate in a future article. Just now, however, I am dealing only with those things which are really indispensable, things without which one might as well stay at home and fish in the bath tub.

Now for the aforementioned small details, with their approximate cost, in Rupees.....

One doz spoons, varying in size from 1 to 4 inches, fitted with triangle hooks at top and bottom, value about R15.

Half-a-dozen phantoms, from 2 to 5 inches long, bright colors, R15.

Half-a-dozen plain triangle hooks, mounted on gimp, R2,

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Half-a-dozen gimp mounted spinning flights, R5.

Half-a-dozen gimp traces, R5; half-a-dozen wire traces, R5.

Half-a-dozen gut traces (3 salmon, and 3 fine), R10.

Half-a-dozen baiting needles, R1. One disgorger, R1.

Half-a-dozen assorted dun and black flies on No. 12 sneck hooks, R1.

Half-a-dozen assorted dun and black flies on No. 6 sneck hooks, R1.

One dozen gut mounted bare hooks, No. 12, R1.

Three dozen spare triangle hooks unmounted, R3.

Three dozen swivels, assorted sizes, mostly large, R3.

One dozen leads, assorted weights, from 1 oz. to 2 lbs., R5.

One strong landing net, largest size procurable, R10.

There are one or two shops in Colombo where some of the above can be bought, but whether or not the stock is fresh and reliable, I would not like to say. I usually buy everything from Luscombes of Allahabad, but if that is too distant, and time is an object, I would suggest Messrs. Oakes & Co., of Madras. It is possible, however, that Messrs. H. W. Cave & Co. have most of the tackle mentioned, as I see they are now advertising fishing tackle outfits.

Having got together the nucleus of what will I trust some day become a complete outfit, it next behoves the owner to find something in the way of a

TACKLE BOX

or chest. For many years I carried everything, except rods, in an old wooden box, each article having a smaller tin box to itself (cigarette boxes mine were)

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with a label on the lid of each. Lately, however, I have adopted a small chest, made on the principle of Foot's patent travelling cases, that is, with a nest of drawers, protected by a let down flap, which fastens at the top. This is made of thin teak, and the outside measurements are, 12 inches high, 18 inches long, and 14 in. deep, the three drawers being 2 in., 3 in., and 4½ in., respectively, in depth. This I find a most excellent arrangement, the heavy items, such as reels and leads, being kept in the deep bottom drawer, and the traces and other light articles in the little one at the top. Spoons, hooks, and flies I keep in the middle drawer.

One of the greatest advantages of this arrangement is, that everything is instantly forthcoming when wanted, whereas, with the old box, the thing needed was invariably at the very bottom. A strap lengthwise round the chest makes a convenient handle to carry it by, and the whole is strong enough to afford a comfortable seat, should one be needed, either for bottom fishing or during "a snack." Of course, it is considerably heavier than a tin box, but as I have pointed out in connection with rod cases, a pound or two more or less, in weight, is not such a very important matter after all.

Before leaving this subject of tackle there is one other matter I should like to impress upon the reader, and that is the immense importance of being certain that everything is quite sound before starting out on a trip.

Always Test Your Tackle Before Starting Operations.

Time and again I have seen beautiful fish—Mahseer included—lost for ever just because the angler has been too impatient, and, yes, I must write it, too lazy, to test his line and trace before commencing operations.

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In this respect, if in no other, I practice what I preach, and before going out I invariably draw off, yard by yard, about 15 feet of line, from every reel I possess, and subject it to a steady strain, both in separate short lengths, and all in one piece, which if it stands, well and good; if not, I cut it off and spare not. All true followers of the gentle art love their tackle far above any other inanimate thing they possess (if you doubt this, try and buy a favourite reel or rod from a known angler, and see what sort of scowl you will be treated to), and are therefore loth to throw it away, but there is no doubt that this feeling has lost many a good fish, and hard as it sometimes is to do, it must be done, or serious defeat is the certain result. Do not put your line to unfair tests or jerky strains. This will only weaken it, and when the strain of a fish comes you will probably have a break. Just put on a steady strain of what you suppose to be 5 or 6 lbs., and you will find a line that stands that, will hold the most energetic 30 lbs. fish that ever swam.

This question of strain leads up to another very interesting and important point, and that is what strain can be safely used with ordinary tackle such as I have enumerated above.

Some years ago a discussion arose between several members of the Calcutta Angling Club, myself amongst the number, as to whether or not the majority of us had anything like correct ideas as to what strain, in actual pounds avoirdupois, we were using when playing a fish. It was generally thought that in trying to stop a fish of say 25 lbs., in still water, that from 8 to 12 lbs. pull would be about the strain. To our great surprise, however, we found it was very much less, in fact not half so much, and this can be very easily proved by anyone who will take the trouble to experiment. Proceed as follows. Mount your rod with reel and line, but instead of hooks and

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bait, take a reliable spring balance, to which attach the end of the line. Now let a friend suppose himself a fish and walk off say 30 yards, noting the varying weight (which will be the strain) recorded on the balance. When he has reached 30 yards let him stand still and watch the balance, while you try how much strain you can safely put on your rod and line, and the figure will be a matter of very considerable surprise. Even though you "give him the butt" to use a time-honoured expression, you will find *seven pounds* not only a back breaking pull, but most likely a rod breaking one into the bargain. This is such a simple and at the same time instructive experiment, that I recommend all anglers of an enquiring turn of mind, to try it.

A QUOTATION FROM THE PATRON SAINT.

In my next contribution I hope to give the reader a detailed account of a full day spent on local water (at Kalutara), and trust the good time there described will be some inducement to other anglers to go and do likewise. Meantime, here's a nice cheerful little thing for a fellow to come across just as he starts out to write on piscatorial matters. It is from the introduction to "The Compleat Angler" by our patron saint, Izaac Walton:—

"Now for the art of catching fish, that is to say, how to make a man—that was none—to be an angler by a book; he that undertakes it, shall undertake a harder task than Mr. Hales, a most valient and excellent fencer, who, in a printed book called 'A Private School of Defence,' undertook to teach that art or science, and was laughed at for his labour—not but that many useful things might be learnt by that book, but he was laughed at because that art was not to be taught by words, but practice; and so must angling. . . . . For angling may be said to be so like the mathematics, that it can never be fully

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learnt; at least not so fully, but that there will still be more new experiments left for the trial of other men that succeed us.

"But I think that all who love this game may here learn something that may be worth their money, if they be not poor and needy men; and in case they be, I then wish them to forbear to buy it, for I write, not to get money, but for pleasure, and this discourse boasts of no more; for I hate to promise much and deceive the reader.

"And however it proves to him, yet I am sure I have found a high content in the search and conference of what is here offered to the reader's view and censure; I wish him as much in the perusal of it."

THE KITOOL ROD: A QUESTION,

Just as these notes go to press I am in receipt of a letter from an Up-country reader, who enquires what work I consider the country *Kitool*, or palm leaf rod, capable of. Curiously enough I am just in the throes of a series of experiments with this rather wonderful little rod, and am, therefore, reluctant to prejudice future remarks by saying much on the subject now. I may, however, mention right here that, so far as I have gone, I find them "not in it" with Ringalls, either for strength, recovering properties, or appearance, while they are, according to all accounts, very short lived. I hope to embody the detailed results of my investigations in either No. 4 or No. 5 article.

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ARTICLE No. 4.

Pre-Dawn Noises, Before the Writer's Honourable Departure.

It had been raining heavily all night; from 10 p.m. till 4 a.m., I had lain awake listening to a torrential downpour as it whipped the leaves of adjacent palm trees, and churned up the red gravel round my house. The sea close by roared like some hungry beast of prey, and the weird howling of numerous dogs that are supposed to guard the property of my neighbours, blended dismally with the unearthly screams of two amorous felines that belong to the lady next door.

Some day, when time and opportunity serve, I hope to investigate the mystery surrounding "our pets" as represented by the varied creatures owned by dwellers down the road in which I live, and to find out why it is that dogs, cats, pea-fowl, guinea-fowl, and the truculent barn-door fowl, are as the breath of life to most of the good folks who honour our neighbourhood with their presence.

From 4 a.m. onward till day-light, it is understood in my household that no sleep need be expected, as this is the period set aside for, and sacred to, the afore-said fowls who then vociferate their loudest and appear to be holding a sort of competition as to which can make the greatest noise and keep it up for the longest spell. There is one old rooster in particular, the wringing of whose neck would afford me unalloyed pleasure, and upon whose remains I could dance with ghoulish glee!

But to return. The light was growing gradually stronger, the dogs were all asleep, and I was about to follow their example, when I suddenly remembered

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that this was the day appointed for a trip to Kalutara in search of the wily Moda, and the dainty Mullet.

Instantly I was out of bed, and in due course, having satisfied the inner man, took my "honourable departure" (as the Japs say) to Kalutara.

The rain had now ceased, the sun appeared with almost blinding glare, and the remaining clouds were whisked away to the north by the fresh salt breeze. Arrived at Kalutara, our first care was to secure a boat, and this was not so easy as it might have been, since we wanted one on the

LAGOON BETWEEN SOUTH KALUTARA AND THE SEA.

I have always found it comparatively easy to get boats here on the river, but on the lagoon it is not only a question of time, but generally, of eternity also!

However, we eventually got a very leaky old tub with an ancient and wobbly outrigger, and started off for a morning's troll. Previously, while waiting for the boat, we had sent off a man to the local fish market, and another to the back garden of the Rest House, for bait; the former for prawns, and the latter for worms, and by the time the boat arrived we had a goodly store of both. There is a funny little shanty—something between a Burmese village hut and a Margate bathing machine—standing out in the lagoon on spindly legs, and used for some mysterious purpose which I have not discovered up to date. However, it looked a good comfy place to sit in when the elements made things unpleasant outside, which they did pretty frequently, so we made our headquarters therein, and during one lengthy shower, enjoyed quite a nice little bit of bottom fishing, the fish caught being, I think, *cirrhina cirrhosa*, and the bait used, a skinned but uncooked prawn. I have always understood that these fish, which by the way are generally called white carp,

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were so shy that it was almost impossible to take them on a hook, but on this occasion they were so obliging as to bite boldly enough, and although we caught nothing larger than three pounds in weight, they put up a really first class fight for liberty, and showed themselves as plucky as many a seven pound labeo or moda.

Fish at Play.

Toward the evening I noticed quite a number of nice fish rising, round the south end of the lake, and by dint of careful management, manœuvred our boat to within ten or fifteen yards of them. My first idea was that they were rising to a fly of some sort, but the most careful watching failed to detect a *poochi* of any kind moving on the face of the water and I concluded they were simply playing, as fish often will at this hour. My boatman—I am burning to describe his dress and general appearance, but my reader may be feminine, so I forbear—was a first-class chap and knows about all there is to know, as to varieties and habits of the local fish, but like all his class, cannot tell you the English name of any.

The fish rising so freely were said by him to be godair, or kodair, and not to be caught by any process known to him, while they were playing. There are some generally accepted facts, in connection with fishing (as in other things) that I never could bring myself to believe without personal demonstration, and this was a case, so out came my trusty fly rod, and a few minutes later I was deep in the mysteries of my fly book.

First, I tried that sheet anchor af all good Mahseer fishers, the blackamoor, and I regret to say I flogged the hook nearly bare without moving a fin. In more or less rapid succession I tried a cock-o-the-walk, a black palmer, a smoky dun, a gaudy salmon fly of unknown name, and to none of these would they pay the least attention. Then eventually, just as I was

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getting a suitable swear word ready, (and a really suitable one takes some thinking out when you've changed your fly six times in fifteen minutes, let me tell you), I bethought me of a curious looking monstrosity which has reposed in the dark seclusion of my book for ten long years or more, an object called by courtesy a fly, but bearing no resemblance to any insect ever beheld by man, drunk or sober. It was originally made by me as an attempt to copy a bass fly, which is the tip of a white pigeon feather, mounted palmer fashion on a large size hook, mine being size, 3/0. To call it crude, would be altogether too complimentary, for it was the kind of thing one would expect to see in Lawson Wood's prehistoric pictures—almost a young seagull.

Anyway some good fairy whispered me to try it, and up it went, at the point of a stout gut cast. My fly had barely touched the water for the second time when my heart felt as if it had suspended business, for behold the distinct swirl, noiseless, and oily, made by a fish "coming short." Again my pigeon flew out, straight and true, and this time the deed was done, for away went my fish to the accompaniment of the sweetest music an angler ever hears—the song of the reel. I wish I could say my fish fought hard and was as good as a Mahseer, alas he was a lout, and after the first run, came in like a log, and was ignominiously netted. He scaled exactly 3½ lbs.

I feel somewhat diffident about saying just what he proved to be, because so many anglers who have tried to catch this particular fish have failed. Still I am practically convinced in my own mind that it was *chanos salmoneus*, or as it is more generally called,

HYDERS FISH,

the appearance, measurements, and every other characteristic being identical with Dr. Day's

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description. The only thing that causes me to doubt the identity, was the sluggish fashion in which he came to the net, but this of course may be accounted for in other ways; I have for instance frequently known fish to be too surprised to realize they were 'actually caught, and to begin their fight only when they found themselves on shore.

Ten minutes later I was into another, a much nobler fish, but my lease of luck had run out, and before I got him within sight both he and my precious pigeon had disappeared for ever.

The gut must have been destroyed by rust at the shank of the hook, and in the excitement of landing my fish, and attending to subsequent mental back-pattings, I had quite forgotten to examine it, hence the catastrophe.

Again I tried some of my other flies, including a coachman of pale gray, but all to no purpose. They wanted a white fly or nothing, and I was reluctantly obliged to cut short what I know would have been one of the red-letter days of my fishing career, and wander despondently back to the resthouse.

During that short walk I managed to think of a 'suitable word!"

Instead of the "Etnagula," a Ducking and Loss of Tackle.

Half-an-hour spent at the resthouse table, found me more reconciled to fate, and I was just wondering if white pigeon feathers could be found in Kalutara when my boatman came in and announced that the tide in the estuary had turned, and that now was a good time to try for a fish he had been telling me about, the etnagula. I don't quite know yet what the etnagula is, but I have a shrewd suspicion that he is one of the *cybium* family, mentioned in my first article, but that he is a fish worthy of our acquain-

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tance is certain, as evidenced by the fact that only a few days ago one which was hooked near the mouth of the river, succeeded in towing two unwilling natives and a good big canoe nearly a mile out to sea and would probably have taken them a few miles further had they not got frightened and cut themselves free, losing thereby fifty yards of good line, and most likely a magnificent fish. Sounds almost like tarpon, eh? I felt just about ready to tackle a fish of this sort, so promptly embarked on the largest available canoe, and off we went.

I think I mentioned before that my lease of luck had run out. I regret to add that up to the hour I left Kalutara it had not been renewed.

We had got barely half way across the river, and I was just mounting my big reel, and a wire trace—my tackle chest wide open the while—when without warning of any sort, over went the show, and next minute I bumped on the bottom of the Kaluganga! I need hardly say I did not remain there longer than necessary, and next moment, was floundering about in the waves, making frantic grabs at such articles of my outfit as were good enough to float, and, as may be supposed, they were not numerous, most of my precious kit, the sum of many years careful thought, and still more careful selection, having disappeared for good.

That "suitable word" of mine came in very handy again!

By the time I had dried my clothes and emptied the water out of the few boxes left in my tackle chest, the return train to Colombo was due, and I returned, a sadder if not a wiser man.

P. S.

The Up country correspondent who recently wrote me, re kitool rods, will, I hope, forgive me if I post-

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pone my remarks on that subject to a future article. Just now I am spending all my leisure in re-arranging my tackle, replacing the lost items, and practicing that "suitable word!"

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ARTICLE No. 5.

A Fly-Book Study After the Kaluganga Ducking.

The re-arrangement of my fishing outfit, necessitated by the mishap related in the last article, brought to light one or two interesting facts, which, I feel, are of sufficient interest to brothers of the rod to relate here. I had a large fly-book, bought many years ago at Farlows, in the Strand, with three sorts of leaves, namely, parchment, felt and washleather, and each of these leaves held various flies, some eyed, and others mounted to gut.

Owing to various delays—no, it was *not* the race week—I was unable to open this book and see what had happened for four days after the accident, and when I did so, I got a shock, a considerable shock.

In the first place, the leather covers were decorated with a whitey-blue fungus that, with a little imagination, might have been taken for a growth of mushrooms, while the aroma that greeted my unsuspecting olfactory nerve was altogether too awful for words. The breeze at No. 3 green, Ridgeway links, is violets in comparison, and *that* takes some beating at times! The parchment leaves were hopelessly gummed together, the hooks thereon red with rust and done for, but gut and flies as good as ever. The flies in washleather pockets were in even more parlous state, since the hooks were not only badly rusted, but the gut had suffered also, in fact had entirely perished. On the other hand, the flies on the felt leaves look as fresh as they did the day they were tied; there is no rust on the hooks and the gut is in perfect condition.

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Now, how is this? Washleather has been accepted, from time immemorial, as the very finest material in which to preserve gut, and I must acknowledge I have hitherto found it answer admirably.

I can only suppose the salt in the water had something to do with it, but in any case I should like the opinion of any reader who may ever have lost gut from washleather pockets getting wet.

Thanks to the precaution of always keeping them in vaselined cloth, my Steelhair traces (of which more anon) are quite unharmed, and this in spite of the fact that the cloth itself was sopping wet. My reels and lines I fortunately opened out within an hour of the ducking, consequently they have not suffered.

Steelhair Traces.

I have mentioned Steelhair traces, and as I have found these such splendid articles I want to pass the tip along. They are made of 3 strands of finest annealed steel wire, and are considerably finer and less visable than the ordinary gut trace, while instead of having a breaking strain of 8 or 10 lbs. will easily lift 50 or 60 lbs., probably much more. Of course, they need more care, as they easily perish with rust, but if you will keep a small tin of vaseline or other solidified oil in your tackle chest, and just drop them into it after use, they are no trouble whatever, and with care will last a lifetime. Gut, on the other hand (in a tropical climate), may last two seasons. If it does you are lucky. I have done great execution with these traces at bottom fishing for Rohu (*labeo rohita*) in India, and made good bags when others of the party fishing near by, without traces, hardly got a bite. In that particular case, of course, a gut trace might have answered just as well, but no one had any to try. One trace I have of this make, which is in my mind as I write—a purchase

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made as far back as 1903—and I think I can safely say I have landed at least 500 lbs. of fish on it, and to all appearance it is new. As I did not start out to write these notes with the idea of providing gratis advertisements to fishing-tackle dealers, I refrain from saying more here about Steelhair traces, but if anyone is interested in them, they (or he) has only to drop me a line and I will gladly supply the maker's name and whereabouts. I have had several years experience with them, and consider them wonderful.

Of course there are other good metal traces, the Hercules for instance (first made by Hardy Bros., of Alnwick) is an item which should be included in the outfit of every angler with any pretence to call himself fully equipped, and although I possess and sometimes use them, I prefer the Steelhair as being not only much finer, but quite as strong, and much neater. The Hercules has the great advantage of being practically rust proof, but they are useless for fine fishing.

The Kitool Rod.

An Up-country correspondent, referred to in my last batch of notes, has written asking me what work I consider the "easily procured *kitool* palm rod capable of," and I must do my best to answer the question, but I am afraid I have very little data to go on at present.

Being by nature a chronic "Truthful James" (in spite of the nasty things people say about us anglers and our yarns), I must confess I had never handled a *kitool* until just before I got the above enquiry. I had seen scores, and often been astonished at the weight of some of the fish lifted straight out of the water with them by natives, but had always lacked the time to experiment with them myself. Since then, however, I have made several tests, of a simple nature, the result of which are set forth below; but the reader

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will please bear in mind that the rod is quite new to me, and that I stand open to correction on most points.

First, let me explain what the *kitool* is, though who does not know? Well, it is the centre rib of the leaf that adorns the jaggery palm, or scientifically, *caryota urens*, and is simply stripped of the side leaves and dried in the sun. The longest I have measured, so far, is 11 feet, but no doubt they grow longer and possibly stronger, but for purposes of comparison with other rods, this length is as good as any. As they cannot apparently be induced to remain straight, however, I do not think many Europeans will be bothered using them, certainly I would not, for with me a perfectly straight rod is a *sine qua non*. Out of the number bought, I selected three, one of them being considerably thinner at the butt than the other two, and this rod I have in pickle, so to speak, the recipe for preservation being given further on. The other two I temporarily mounted with rings, and applied the spring balance test as laid down in my last week's notes, the result being as follows:—

No. 1 rod. This I first tested with the curve on the under side, *i. e.*, in the position in which it grew, and found it would comfortably pull 20 lbs., a strain I should be sorry to apply to any English made rod, especially if it were my own! Reversed, *i. e.*, with the point up, it promptly smashed between the 7th and 8th lbs., as I had rather expected it would.

No. 2 rod. With this I made two sideway experiments and the right side having stood ten pounds, I turned it round to the left, and it broke at 4½ lbs.! I should mention that both these rods had been seasoned, and were bought at a native tackle-dealer's shop, as ready and fit for use. Inspection of their internal economy revealed a core of pith, surrounded by a very thin wall of fibre, which is naturally of less length on the under

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side than on the upper, hence the smash when strain was applied the reverse way to that intended by nature. There is probably a way of getting over this difficulty, by treating them as I am doing the third, that is, with oil and heat. I presume most anglers know how this is done, but for the benefit of a possible neophyte, I will just mention that the rod should be swathed in soft rags which have been previously well saturated with oil, and kept in close proximity to the kitchen stove for a month. I use a half-and-half mixture of coconut and kerosene oil, or in the absence of the former, crude castor oil. But who wants to go to all this entirely unnecessary trouble? Certainly I don't, Ringalls being quite good enough for me.

A Tip Concerning Ringall Rods.

Here's a useful tip for anyone possessing Ringal rods. Cut off the knot at the extreme (butt) end, and you will find a hollow of nearly a foot in length. Turn the rod butt end upwards and fill this cavity with oil in the proportions mentioned above, and keep it in that position till the oil works its way clean down to the tip, which it will do if left long enough. Don't expect it to percolate "while you wait," because it won't—you will get tired long before the oil passes the first knot. Pierce a small hole in the edge at the extreme end (butt), and put a string loop through it; this you can hang on a nail at the side of your house, if in the sun so much the better, but it must *not* be exposed to the rain. An old rod will be soaked in from six to eight weeks. Yes, it is a trouble, no doubt, but if done thoroughly, and the rod is free of flaws, you have a jewel of price. I have seen such which could not be bought, though as much as fifty, and even a hundred rupees each, were offered for them. They become much like whalebone, only more rigid, and are, of course, absolutely unbreakable.

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KALUTARA RE-VISITED.

I paid another visit to Kalutara a few days ago, hoping to glean some further information regarding the etnagula, but had the misfortune to find the river partially in flood, and the sea coming in with such terrific violence that not even the local fishermen would venture afloat.

I also tried to renew my acquaintance with *chanos salmoneus* (Hyders fish), but they were either not at home, or disinclined to try my dandy new white pigeon. A native fishing near the bridge caught a very nice moda weighing 9 or 10 lbs., but the cool way in which he lifted it straight from the water, without giving it half a chance, strongly tempted me to smite him over the head with the butt of my rod!

JUVENILE PESTS.

Another thing which inclines me to forget the precept of my youth to "let not your angry passions rise," is the torment of boys that will persist in hanging round when one is fishing from the shore. I have fished in many countries, and have, I think, been subjected to my fair share of annoyances, borne with the fortitude characteristic of our gentle art, but of all the pestiferous little beasts, commend me to the juvenile Sinhalese.

In English and Hindustani I have emptied the vials of my wrath upon them, condemning themselves and many previous generations on both sides of their families, to regions where the temperature is said to vary even less than it does in Ceylon, but all to no purpose: they get worse. Their only reply, usually, is an empty coconut shell, or other missile, shied at one's rod and line, the bigger the splash the louder the laugh that follows.

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Proposed Fishing Club at Galle.

A correspondent at Galle has written me with reference to a sea fishing club which is to be formed there at an early date, and has asked me for a copy of rules, etc., of similar clubs at home, or elsewhere Unfortunately I have none by me, but it is just possible one of my up-country readers may have, in which case may I ask him to let me see and copy it. My correspondent mentions that there are quite a large number of prospective members, all simply dying to become expert brethren of the craft, and as I know there is heaps of good sport to be had there in the harbour, and probably outside also, there is no reason why they should not have a right royal time, and set we Colomboites a good example—I mean piscatorily. So mote it be.

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ARTICLE No 6.

The S. W. Monsoon, what there was of it in this year of grace 1907, appears to have blown itself out, the waves are daily growing less turbulent, and before these lines get into print we may have seen the last of the big seas, for this year, flinging their beautiful spray over the harbour breakwater.

And with the subsiding of the sea comes thoughts of the good times some of us hope to have thereon before another monsoon happens along, thoughts of the festive seer, and the lordly etanagula which still figure on the credit page of our piscatorial ledger as unrealized assets. May they speedily be transferred to the opposite page!

To this end I would ask those of my readers who are adventurous enough to accompany me "down to the sea in ships," to provide themselves with the following items in addition to such of the details set forth in my third article, as I will enumerate further on.

OUTFIT FOR DEEP SEA FISHIN

One sea rod. This should be about 9 feet length, and as stiff as possible, fitted with a pulley t_o, and either a "bridge" or "roller guard" butt ring. This latter is of the most vital importance, and must on no account be ignored, since the slightest touch of the line against your hand, when once a big fish puts on speed, means an instantaneous gash clear down to the bone. The forefinger of my left hand bears two white scars, silent witnesses of youthful carelessness in this respect, and daily warnings to avoid running lines in future.

These rods are now made by nearly all tackle manufacturers, and sold under the general name of

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sea rods, any little alteration of detail needed being fixed up by the angler himself. In England most sea anglers seem to swear by 3 jointed rods, but I fancy this is chiefly for the sake of compactness, as an 8 foot rod in three joints will fit into any ordinary portmanteau or trunk, but they are not so strong as two jointed ones, and these again are not so strong as my favourite Ringalls. All the same I am afraid I must admit that the latter are not the ideal rod for deep sea work, though in the absence of the proper weapon I should have no hesitation in using one as a makesbift. For regular use, however, and particularly if the boat be small or crowded, I should expect to see them come to grief, since an oar, spar or anything weighty dropping on a Ringall would smash it to atoms, whereas a solid greenheart, built cane, or hickory are little or none the worse for a certain amount of rough usage. Otherwise, of course, the Ringall would be alright; I have used mine for harbour fishing (when I could stand on the wall) and always found them all I could wish.

Sea rods such as I have described are not very expensive, and a really good one can be bought and landed here for about R10—including an extra top without pulley, for use in ordinary river trolling.

I am sorry to say the next item, a

SEA REEL,

is not come by so cheaply, being by far the most costly item in the angler's chest, as anyone consulting a dealer's list will soon realize. Of course, there are cheap sea reels of the Nottingham and other patterns, but unfortunately they are all made of wood, and generally unseasoned wood at that, the result being that "a tropical sun puts an end to the fun" by warping them into an immovable mass provocative of much profanity, and sometimes the loss of good fish. My

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advice therefore is, when buying a sea reel, open your purse as wide as it can be stretched, and buy only the best. May I go further and tell you what I consider the best? Well, then, my vote is for either an aluminum Malloch or a Silex, the former made, I think, by Carter & Co., and the latter by Hardy Bros., the cost in each case being about £3 sterling. The size should be at least 6 inches, 7 inches is better still, and if ordering from the maker, a few extra shillings will always ensure an additional ½in. in the width between plates, if desired. The advantage of this extra ½in. is that about 50 yards more line can be carried, or, if preferred, the usual length in a stouter size. And this brings us to the very important matter of

SEA LINES.

I think we may take 200 yards as being the most desirable length, with a minimum of 150, below which it is certainly not safe to go, particularly where such powerful gentry as seer are expected. And when one *is* buying a sea line why spoil the ship for a ha'porth o' tar, so to speak? It is an item that does not figure very frequently in the angler's budget, and I have found it false economy to buy either too little or too common.

I believe it is an admitted axiom amongst sea anglers that salt water will ruin any undressed line, no matter how strong, in less than a dozen outings. It is therefore a case of either buying a dressed line, or yourself dressing a plain one. I have tried both, and prefer those bought ready for use. Firms who make a life study of these things are far more likely to have the correct dressing than a casual amateur experimenting with chemicals he has never seen before. Not to mention the trouble and mess!

I use the Warner's plaited flax line mentioned in my second article, and so far, have found it quite

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satisfactory. They cost about R8 per 100 yards, and can be had in almost any length, and from all tackle shops.

In addition to the above, we shall require the following, most of which has, presumably, been already acquired for river and lagoon fishing :—

Half-a-dozen large spoons, mounted.

Half-a-dozen wire traces.

Same quantity of the following: Archer (or Chapman) spinners, mounted ; Halcyon spinners ; Large size Devons; Gimp spinning flights ; Gimp paternosters ; and large gimp mounted single hooks.

One dozen leads, saddle pattern, assorted, from 2oz up to 3 lbs.

One good gaff ; and don't forget the little box of swivels and baiting needles.

Where to Go?

Before I knew the ropes as well as I do now, I put the above enquiry to a friendly Scot. He said: "Well, I always go to the G. O. H. myself, but I am told you can get a drop of the real thing at the Galle Face also, but, in any case, just ask for "————. I did not hear the rest.

Getting out to sea for a day's comfortable fishing is not such a simple matter as one might suppose. At home there is a large demand for fishing boats, and the supply has promptly appeared on the scene to reap a rich harvest of half-crowns, but in this out of the way corner of the world, a safe and comfortable boat, capable of roughing a choppy sea, takes some finding. And even when found, it is not everybody that can get aboard and contemplate with internal calm an imaginary whiff of bacon and cabbage, or enjoy the thought of crusted old dry fish; so in case the reader would

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rather be excused, I can suggest the breakwater wall as an excellent spot from which to make a bid for sport. Here he will require not only his rod, line and paternoster, but an amount of skill and fine fishing that will surprise him, for the fish in Colombo harbour are about as highly educated and hard to catch as any I know of. A good spot from which to fish is at the angle (no pun intended) where the road is reduced in width. Explain to your servant the exact spot you intend fishing, and let him go down two or three hours ahead of yourself, and thoroughly ground-bait the place, afterwards sitting tight thereby to keep off intruders. For

GROUND-BAIT

I use the following, all ingredients being chopped up as fine at possible, and mixed with 5 lbs of wet bran :—

1 lb. raw prawns, 2 lbs. raw liver, 1 lb. boiled rice, and ½ lb. ground nuts. Roast the nuts—they are called rata kaju in Sinhalese. and nella kadele in Tamil—until they give out a pleasant aroma, then grind them up on a curry stone and mix the lot together. Do not overdo the water part, the mixture, if properly made, should be about as thick as porridge, and, all things considered, doesn't smell at all bad. Skin the prawns before you cut them up. For hook bait I use prawns, worms, or small dead fish, mullet for preference, though sardines answer quite well.

LARGEST SEER EVER CAUGHT IN THE HARBOUR.

Quite recently I fished from the breakwater wall and had a most enjoyable hour's sport, using the above baits. I do not think large fish are very plentiful in the harbour, but perch of various sorts, whiting, and a small striped flat fish (*etroplus suratensis*, I think) are fairly numerous, while there is always the possibility of a wandering seer. About ten days ago, a native, fishing at the very spot indicated above, was

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lucky enough to hook and land one of the largest seer ever caught in the harbour, a specimen of *cybium guttatum*, which he subsequently sold by acution for R15 50. So you see, you never know your luck! I regret to say I did not get the chance to weigh it, but it was certainly well over 50 lbs. in weight.

More Hyders Fishing: Bentota.

Since my last batch of notes appeared I have spent another day at Bentota, returning therefrom covered with glory and fish scales.

Now I will tell you something well worth remembering. *Chanos salmoneus*, as some of my readers are aware, is a difficult fish to get on terms with, and although I have done the trick once or twice with a white feather, he is not often to be caught napping that way. But there is just one thing that above all others appeals to his "little mary," a hairy sort of green water weed that is very plentiful at Bentota, and which is used exclusively by the fishermen there when after Hyders fish. Sorry I cannot give you the English, Latin, or Sinhalese name of this weed, but the Tamil word is pashi, and if it is a bit slimy I cannot help that—it is a good bait.

About half a mile above the bridge on the south side of the river is a good place to try, but as these fish are very wary, you will need a long rod, say about 15 feet, and a very fine line, plus the skill to cast light tackle at least 30 feet. The local fishermen, I noticed, use kitools of about 16 feet length, and a fine gut-like line which I am told is made from the fibre of the pine apple plant. With these crude tools they are veritable artists, and a cast of 40 or 50 feet is by no means uncommon, while if the wind be favourable they will cast considerably further.

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Well, I tried some pashi, twisted round a number 4 Limerick mounted to gut, and in less than ten minutes was fast into a beauty! I regret to add that I never landed him, for with the first awkward plunge my gut cast parted, and I was left to do brief justice to the situation in a few crisp and expressive words, words that were quite suitable to the occasion. I had bought that very trace not ten days before, and prior to mounting it had carefully tested the strength, which seemed quite alright, so why it gave remains a mystery.

Anyway tear-shedding over spilt milk is, happily, not one of my failings, and in a few minutes I had substituted a Steelhair trace, and very shortly after struck another fish which eventually came safely to the scales, and proved himself a six-pounder. Subsequently my heart was made glad with two more, one of 4 and one of 5¼ lbs, all the same kind (*Chanos salmoneus*) and I was most agreeably surprised at the determined fight they one and all showed.

As I mentioned in a previous article, I did some little business with these fish at Kalutara, in still water, and found them about as energetic as oysters; which is another of many instances in which river fish have proved themselves superior, from a sporting view-point, to those caught in tanks or lakes.

Curiously enough these fish seem to feed only on the ebb tide, for although I fished on for about an hour after the flow set in, I never got another bite. All the native fishermen, I noticed, cleared off immediately the tide turned. They knew a thing or two evidently.

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ARTICLE No. 7.

THE BAMIN.

I have been asked by an Up-country correspondent for a list of places round the coast where Bamin (*Polynemus tetradactylus*) are to be found, and although I cannot be quite certain, having had very few encounters with this magnificent fish, I believe they frequent most of the estuaries round the Island.

I have seen them at Dodanduwa, Bentota, Kalutara and in the fish market at Colombo. They are also caught, to my knowledge, somewhere near Negombo (at which station the Nair is also very plentiful), as also at Elephant Pass. The latter is, I hear, an excellent spot for them.

I cannot, however, learn that they are ever caught on the East coast, and should esteem it a favour if readers at Batticaloa or Trincomalie would enlighten my darkness on this point. One would naturally conclude that fish found at, say Elephant Pass, would frequent all the other straits and estuaries round Ceylon, but this does not seen to follow, and one or two angling friends with whom I have discussed the point, seem to think they do *not* frequent them all.

By the way I am afraid I have never formally introduced my friend with the curly name, and as that is so very formidable, we will call him, for short, by his Indian cognomen, the Bamin.

Excepting only the seer (which of course is really not an estuary fish at all), the Bamin stands unequalled as a sporting fish, and although he is rather difficult to find at home, there are times when he feeds voraciously and will take almost anything that looks eatable.

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There is much diversity of opinion as to what is the best time to try for Bamin, but I believe it may safely be assumed that immediately the tide begins to flow in from the sea, and for an hour or so after, is the time during which they feed most freely.

Provided you are on the spot, you are not likely to be left long in doubt as to whether they are on the feed or not, for they rush to and fro, *generally across stream*, like small submarines, making repeated leaps clean out of the water, and descending again with resounding smacks that almost suggest the reward of infantile misdeeds! They do not apparently reach any great size, the heaviest I have weighed so far being 12½ lbs., but they are marvellously active, and a 10 lb. Bamin, given open water and good condition, will run out a hundred yards of line without a stop. He has an awful mouthful of teeth, however, and nothing short of wire or gimp mounts are proof against their destructive points. Also they afford a very poor hook hold, the result being that quite 50 per cent. of the fish hooked manage to "spit it out" and get clear away—to, let us hope, "fight another day."

The only two spots near Colombo, where I have caught, or seen Bamin caught, are at the point of that little breakwater to the north of Bentota rest house, and near the river mouth at Kalutara. They are very fond of haunting the piles of wooden bridges, but unfortunately there are no such sanctuaries at either of the above places, which from the angler's point of view is not without some advantage perhaps, since our friend has a happy knack of doubling round the piles and cutting your line against the sharp edges of oyster and barnacle shells.

Locally Bamin are rarely fished for by natives other than with traps and nets, the reason being, I

imagine, that the feeding time of this fish is too brief to pay them, in addition to which the flesh of the Bamin is not in great demand. If given the good luck to catch them on the feed, however, mount a mullet of about four inches, alive if possible, on a gimp flight and cast so that the current will take it into the vicinity of the rising fish. You will not have to wait long for a run, and then unless your tackle be strong and running free woe betide you.

Do not allow your fish the least suspicion of slackness of line, not even to "strike" as you will certainly be tempted to do, for, after the first rush, striking will be quite superfluous, and the least relaxing of the strain means a chance for the fish to twist the hook from its light hold.

If you find live bait unprocurable, mount a dead one on an Archer or Chapman, and keep it spinning about 18 inches below the surface and well away from your boat. I think I prefer this to using live bait, not only for humane reasons, but because it is possible to cover very much more water. Frequent casts soon knock a young mullet to pieces, and as I always mount a live bait tail up, i.e., with the tail toward the trace, it means losing precious time over changing live bait every time it stops working.

Most Bamin anglers advocate spinning across stream, with which I do not agree, my plan being to anchor a boat in midstream and let the bait travel down with the current. If you sit at the extreme end of the boat and use a 14 or 15 foot rod, you have a fishing radius of nearly 30 feet, which should satisfy any reasonable man. I claim for this plan that you are far less likely to be seen by the fish, who, it must be remembered, feed near the surface, and the distance at which you are visible from a bank or bridge, as compared with that from a boat, is very considerable.

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Au Revoir.

In bringing this article to a close, I take the opportunity of mentioning that the series will now be discontinued for a while, partly owing to pressure of time and partly to enable the writer to make more extended investigations in connection with the seer and other deep sea fish.

Provided my readers are not tired of the subject, I hope to resume my weekly budget of notes in two or three months' time.

For the present then, I will say: "*Au revoir*, but not good bye."

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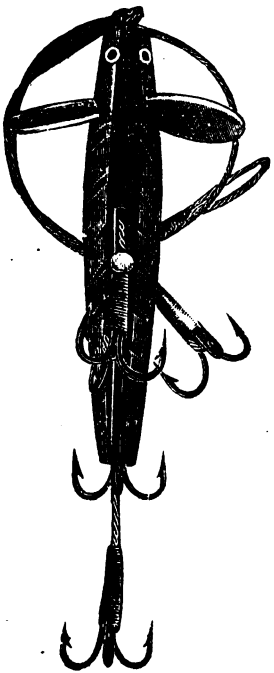

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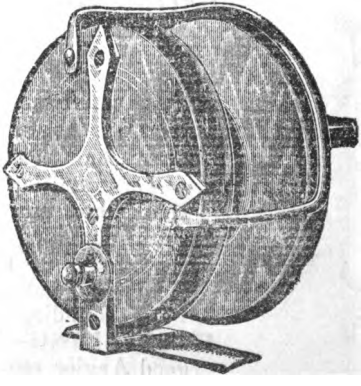

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